

ART. V.—*Grammatical Note on the Gwamba Language in South Africa.* By PAUL BERTHOUD, Missionary of the Canton de Vaud, Switzerland, Stationed at Valdézia, Spelonken, Transvaal. [Prepared at the request of Mr. R. N. CUST, Hon. Secretary.]

# I. GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION.

## A. *The Name.*

THE *Gwamba* language belongs to the South-Eastern Branch of the Bantu family of languages, according to Dr. Bleek's system of classification. But this language was never known under its true name, until the Swiss missionaries settled among the Ma-Gwamba people and studied their language. In his *Comparative Grammar* Dr. Bleek calls it by the name of *Tekeza*; and, complaining of the scanty materials which he could get, he says (§ 32): "*Tekeza* dialects are known to us only through short vocabularies."

Considering the scarcity of information which Dr. Bleek could gather about that language, it is really remarkable that he has been able to understand so well its particular features. Still, it is doubtful whether this name of "*Tekeza*" could to-day be heard anywhere in South Africa; whilst, on the other hand, we find that the Ma-Gwamba people are actually making use of the same words which are given in Bleek's Vocabularies of Lourenzo-Marquès.

Till now the people who speak Gwamba have been known under various names, of which the most largely applied was that of *Ama-Tonga*. This is the word *Tonga* with a Zulu Prefix. But it also appears on geographical maps with the Gwamba Prefix, and then takes the form of *Ba-Tonga*. But again this latter word sounds too nasal and too soft for a Suto-speaking organ, and consequently a Suto man turns it into *Ba-Toka*, as some Geographers write it. But whatever may be its orthography and its pronunciation, that name is

somewhat improper, because it has been given not only to Gwamba people, but also to different tribes which are not of the same blood. Nevertheless, it is used very often, so much so that the Ma-Gwamba have accepted it to a certain extent, and that they sometimes call their native land by the name of "Tonga."

*Knobnoses* (in Dutch *Knopneuzen*) is another name which has been largely applied to the Ma-Gwamba. Its Boer origin is easily detected by the form of the word. It was given to those people on account of their special fashion of tattooing, by which they cause warts of the size and shape of a pea to develop along the top line of the nose to the very point, and also around the eyes. Of course this tattooing gives to their face a horrid appearance. Fortunately that absurd fashion is gradually diminishing and being abandoned, so that before long the name of Knobnoses will no more be appropriate nor applicable.

A third name which has been applied to Ma-Gwamba is that of *Ba-Hloekwa*, which is the same as *Ba-Hlengwe*, but pronounced thus by different people. This name is right enough, but it must be restrained to only a fraction of the large Gwamba tribe; for the Ba-Hlengwe are but the Ma-Gwamba of the north, that is, north of the river Limpopo, and the name cannot be extended farther, neither applied to the whole tribe.

A fourth name, that of *Ma-Koapa*, also spelt *Ma-Koaba*, is to be found on maps. It is only a corruption of the word "Ma-Gwamba," which is the right name of that tribe. This corruption must have arisen from the accidental fact that some explorers, who came into contact with those people, did not know their language, could not speak with them and had to depend upon Ba-Suto guides and interpreters. I may mention that the same thing happened once to myself. Then, Ba-Suto people cannot pronounce the word "Ma-Gwamba," they find it too soft and too nasal, and therefore they change it into "Ma-Koapa." Again, a German traveller would make this "Ma-Koaba." That explanation is not a mere fancy, for it is based upon real facts and experience.

As a rule, a large tribe has not, as such, any proper and general name. But the tribe being divided in a certain number of clans, each one of these smaller communities goes by its proper name; wherefore it is incumbent on the foreigner, either black or white, to apply a generic name to all the people and clans which belong to the same tribe. The propriety then, of such a generic name, lies in its being related to the special character of the tribe, and in its being taken from the tribe's own language.

This is the case with the name "Ma-Gwamba." The people of that tribe have a belief that there is an evil spirit which is always trying to do harm, and which they call "Gwambe." Very often, when a man has a trouble of some kind, he wishes it back to the evil spirit, and says: "Let it go back to Gwambe!" It is from that circumstance that the people of this tribe received from their neighbours the appellation of "Ma-Gwamba," which means "people of Gwambe." This name was adopted by the people because it suited them perfectly. However, according to the grammatical rules of the language, the prefix should really be *Ba*, instead of *Ma*. But a word like Ba-Gwamba would sound very inharmoniously to their ear; and consequently, for euphony's sake, they have taken the only other suitable prefix which could replace Ba, and they call themselves Ma-Gwamba, whilst a singular person will be called a Mo-Gwamba.

From that word they have also named their language, which, according to grammatical rule, is called the *Si-Gwamba*.

### B. *The Tribe and the Land.*

Si-Gwamba is spoken by a large tribe; but it would scarcely be possible to estimate precisely its number. There may possibly be several hundred thousand Ma-Gwamba. Their native land is on the eastern coast of Africa, and extends from Zululand in the south up to Sofala, and perhaps to the Zambesi river, in the north. Inland, the Ma-Gwamba extend as far as three hundred miles from the Indian Ocean,

so that the country which is occupied by the tribe is of a large area.

All the Ma-Gwamba who live north of the Limpopo river, that is to say, the greater part of the tribe, are under the domination of Umzila, that Zulu Chief who, some thirty years ago, left Zululand with a Zulu army, conquered the countries through which he passed, and settled at some distance west of Sofala.

The farthest inland region where Ma-Gwamba settlements are to be found is situated in a south-western direction from Umzila's kraal. Indeed, if we examine a recent map, for instance, that of Petermann's *Mittheilungen* (1872, table 21), or that of Jeppe, which for that matter is a copy of Petermann's, we find on the north of the Limpopo river, along the 31° long., up to the 21° lat. S., a country which has been explored only by the traveller Mauch. The names which we read there, along the routes followed by Mauch, are but those of Gwamba Chiefs. About five years ago I had a good opportunity of collecting some fresh information concerning those Gwamba settlements, when one of my Christian servants, a middle-aged Gwamba man, made a journey back and forth through that same country.

Thus, coming from the north, we first find *Dumbo's* kraal. The river Lunde passes close by, and the people of the kraal drink of its waters. This is close to the frontier, between Ma-Gwamba and Ba-Nyai, or between Umzila's and Lo-Bengula's kingdom. But the maps must be corrected and the frontier removed some twenty miles more to the west; for the first Ba-Nyai settlement, the kraal of Makadyile, is situated on the left bank of the river Lunde, about ten miles north-west of Dumbo.

The father of Dumbo was Ngwenya; they are Ma-Gwamba, under the rule of Umzila. But Dumbo, becoming dissatisfied with his suzerain, left the place and went to live with Lo-Bengula. He was not followed by many of his people; and the kraal is now governed by Dumbo's young brother, named *Rangane*, who is a loyal vassal of Umzila.

If we go southward, we find on the river Bubyee several

Gwamba names, from *Vurmele* downwards. But in this name the letter *V* has the German pronunciation, and therefore it ought to be altered and changed for an *F*. The exact orthography of the name is *Furumele*. However, this Gwamba Chief is no more, and future travellers will find another name at his place, because he was succeeded by his son *Mokaha*.

*Tshukumeta* is a Gwamba Chief.

*Makabele* is also a Mo-Gwamba; but he has emigrated with his people, and gone to settle in a place south of the junction of the Bubyee and Limpopo rivers, near the Gwamba settlement of Makuleka.

*Zamokazi* has also left, to go and settle south of the Limpopo, among the Zoutpansberg lower hills.

*Halata*, *Umkoko*, *Umkokinyane* are all Gwamba people.

Malingotse is only the name of the land.

If now we go S.E., and cross both the Limpopo and its affluent the Limvubu (called Lebvubye by the Ma-Gwamba), we meet some hills, to which the maps give the name of *Sierra de Chicundo*. This somewhat strange name is quite right; but it needs to be explained. I dare say it was first written so by Rita Montanha, in whose language *sierra* is a range of hills; and geographers put down the full name after him. Then came the ordinary readers, who found the whole appellation of *Sierra de Chicundo* sounded very much like a Portuguese or a Spanish name; and accordingly they assumed that it really was a Portuguese name, given to the place by the Portuguese of the coast. But such is not the case. *Chicundo* is a proper Gwamba name, and it was, in this instance, that of a Chief of no mean importance. In the neighbourhood of Chicundo's Hills there are many other Gwamba settlements; but Chicundo himself died a few years ago. I do not know the name of his successor. But at present the most important chief of that country is *Shikwarakwara*, who lives on the left bank of the Limvubu river, at a little distance from the Motswetla chief, Makwarele.

The above details are no doubt sufficient to prove that the various portions of the Gwamba tribe are scattered over a

very extensive country. This country is limited on the south, east, and west, by frontiers which have been well ascertained. But the northern frontier remains to be exactly defined, as the country which extends from Sofala to the Zambesi has, till now, scarcely been explored at all.

Strange to say, a small community of Ma-Gwamba is to be found under the 12° Lat. S., to the west of and not far from Lake Nyassa. The missionaries of Livingstonia and Bandawe are in relation with those Ma-Gwamba, who live there mixed with Xosa and Zulu from the South.

## II. CLASSIFICATION.

Several dialects are to be found in the Gwamba language, and their variations are sometimes very remarkable. But they are still mostly unknown. The books which we have begun printing are written in the dialect of Lorenzo-Marquès, and of the country south of the Limpopo.

The language to which Gwamba most closely relates is certainly Xosa, although the "*ukuhlonipa*" custom is not practised among the Ma-Gwamba. The Suto language differs much more from both Xosa and Gwamba, than those two from each other; and Dr. Bleek judged with accuracy when he stated (§ 22) that "The South-Eastern Branch consists of three distinct species: Kafir, Si-Chuana, and Tekeza." Only, he might have named Xosa between the two others, and put Tekeza the first, as being the natural link between the Middle Branch and Xosa; or again, if Zulu must be distinguished from Xosa, the list of the South-Eastern Branch should be: Gwamba, Zulu, Xosa, and Chuana.

Among Middle Branch languages, the idioms which approach nearest to Gwamba are those of Sena and Tete. But they are as yet too little known to allow of establishing the degree of their relationship with Gwamba. However, if it is not too bold to make a supposition, I should foretell, after what is known of those languages, that a closer study will bring them in very close relationship to Gwamba, closer

than Kua is to Sena, and perhaps than Xosa is to Gwamba. In that manner the Bántu languages will appear to form a regular chain of which it may be felt necessary to know all the links, before a full theory of their origin can be arrived at.

The theory of a "mother-tongue" seems to be actually deprecated, because of the numerous questions that it cannot answer. Thus Mr. Maples, writing on Kua, says: "Ma-Kua possesses a large number of words entirely non-existent in any other of the known languages in Bántu. *No known law of verbal change or transliteration* can account for these words by showing them to be phonologically connected with others in other dialects of the same group. This fact . . . . . refuses to yield to the theory of a mother-tongue." This is quite right; but when we consider that the Bántu dialects are still so imperfectly studied, we are obliged to defer drawing conclusions; for it is not impossible that a more complete acquaintance with the Bántu system may bring forth *new and still unknown laws of verbal changes*, which will rehabilitate "the mother-tongue theory." We can already see that any other theory will have to overcome much greater difficulties than that one. Indeed, the mutual relationship of the Bántu languages is an undeniable fact, and of supreme importance; such a deep and intimate connexion between various languages demands an explanation, and the question must be asked imperiously: "How have they come to be so much like each other?" Therefore I fear that if any new theory is brought forward in opposition with the old hypothesis of a mother-tongue, the said theory will find insuperable the difficulty of answering that question.

But we are still far from any solution, because our knowledge of the Bántu dialects is far too incomplete to give occasion to make I shall not say a *synthesis*, which will only come at the end, but even a full and comprehensive *analysis* of the general system of the Bántu languages. Let us then, for the present, set aside all attempts at constructing a theory of that system, and let us direct our efforts to the analytical study of every particular idiom, in order to prepare the necessary materials for the future edifice.

## III. PHONOLOGY.

The alphabet of the Gwamba language contains a very remarkable peculiarity, which well deserves to draw the attention of linguists. This peculiarity consists in a special consonant which has never been heard of before, and which must be classed as a *labial sibilant*. The sound of this letter is obtained by putting the tongue in the position required for the letter *s*, and then by closing the lips, so that they cover the teeth, and so that the breath produces the friction against the lips only. It is as pure a labial as *p*, *b*, *m*, and is as strong a sibilant as *s* or *sh* (English). At first, a stranger's ear will mistake it for a compound consonant, which it is not, for it may also combine with the letter *t* the same way as *s* does in the words *tsar*, *tsarina*.

When Dr. Peters collected his vocabularies of Lorenzo-Marquès and of Inhambane, he missed the true sound and misunderstood the real value of this letter. Dr. Bleek did of course the same, because he had no other source but Dr. Peters' vocabularies. This traveller took this sound for a combination of *p* and *s*, and consequently he represented it by *ps*.

I may here make a general remark upon vocabularies collected by travellers and explorers. Dr. Peters was, I presume, perfectly prepared for the work he undertook, and his collections of words were made with great care and ability. In spite of that, his vocabulary of Lorenzo-Marquès is very defective, and it contains some gross errors. Thus he gives for the Gwamba word *tillo* the meaning of 'God,' which is a mistake: *tillo* means the *sky*, and the Gwamba word for 'God' is *Shikwembo* (or *Tshikwembo*). Again, for a 'blind man,' he gives this translation:—*loa-koa-ngabo-ne*: it is evident that here Dr. Peters thought this expression was perhaps made of *four* different words, which he attempted to separate with hyphens. But he was somewhat mistaken, and having not learned the Gwamba grammar, he mutilated the language in an awful manner; he divided words and made others with the separated syllables; or he joined in



one word different ones, which ought to have remained separate. In fact, the translation he gave for 'blind man' contains a whole sentence, which, if constructed according to grammatical rule, will read as follows : *lo a ko a nga bone* ; and it means in English, 'the one who says he does not see.' Of course, the idea conveyed by that expression is not wrong ; but nobody would think of giving to this English sentence the form and place of one word ; and the said Gwamba phrase is not the Gwamba expression for 'blind man,' it is but an explanatory description.

Many similar examples of errors could be produced out of Dr. Peters' vocabularies, and when we remember that this eminent traveller deserved more than usual credit, we must forcibly come to this conclusion: when explorers give vocabularies of unknown languages, such vocabularies must be received with caution and reserve, because a person who has not mastered the language, who cannot explain its grammatical forms, and who has not lived long enough among the natives to become fully acquainted with their manner of thinking, that person will often be misled and give a wrong translation.

That is the very reason why Dr. Peters used the combination *ps* to represent the *labial sibilant* which constitutes the most remarkable characteristic of the Gwamba alphabet.

But then, what letter, what sign shall we take to express graphically this newly-discovered consonant? When seeking for a system of writing to be applied to Gwamba, we found the *Standard Alphabet* of Professor Lepsius the best system, and adopted it. But though very rich, it contained of course no representation of our new sound, which has not been heard of before. However, as this sound's basis is a sibilant *fricativa fortis*, the principle of the *Standard Alphabet* led us to take the basis *s* and try to invent for it a practical diacritical sign ; then noticing that the English *sh* was represented by *š*, it was decided to invert the diacritical mark of this and write *ś* for our labial sibilant.

Now the question may be asked : this letter, has it a great importance in the language? or also, as the honourable Pro-

fessor Dr. Lepsius wrote to me: this sound, is it not produced by an anomalous pronunciation of the *s*? It is an easy matter to answer those questions, and to prove that this is a real characteristic sound and of essential importance. We have but to quote from Dr. Bleek's *Comparative Grammar* a sentence of paragraph 471, which says: "The following table showing the correspondence of the derivative prefixes of nouns in the Northern Tekeza dialect spoken at Lorenzo-Marquès, Delagoa Bay, is of course incomplete. It is supposed that the form of the eighth prefix here is *psi*, as in the dialect of Tette, but the vocabularies (as yet our only materials for the knowledge of these dialects) contain no positive evidence of this."

Remembering then that the *psi* of Bleek and Peters finds its true representation in our *ši* and *tši*, I can assert that it is really the form of the eighth prefix in the Gwamba language. Before I could myself procure and read a copy of Bleek's *Comparative Grammar* (which I was recently able to do through Mr. R. N. Cust's obliging kindness), I had pointed out that special form of prefix, both when corresponding with Professor Lepsius and when teaching Gwamba grammar to our missionary students. Therefore this letter (*š*) is the only means of distinguishing a whole class of nouns, and it has for itself a whole and independent set of concord. It is also a mark of the plural, as will be seen by looking at Bleek's tables of prefixes; and in Gwamba this is a rule without any exception: wherever that prefix is heard or seen, the word which owns it is plural.

Moreover, this letter is largely used in the language, not only because it occurs in the middle of words, as well as in the prefix, but because the pronoun, which corresponds to the nouns of that class, is commonly used *by itself* in a general and neutral sense. This pronoun can then be exactly translated by the French word 'cela,' which the English word 'that' renders but insufficiently.

Therefore it is evident that this new letter is of the greatest importance; and the readers of Bleek's *Comparative Grammar* will notice that the alphabets of Sena and of

Tette also possess the same letter, which permits us to think that those dialects are closely related to Gwamba (see Bleek, § 471).

A very strange feature of the Gwamba language is that, unlike its sister-tongues, it has two nasalized vowels (see Lepsius' *Standard Alphabet*, pp. 58, 59). In Indian languages it appears that this nasalization is occasionally applied to all vowels; whilst I think that among European languages French alone possesses nasalized vowels. But Gwamba has only two, the sounds of which we find in the French words *ban* and *pain*, and which Lepsius writes *ã* and *ẽ*. However, those nasalized vowels are not found in a great many words.

Among the *twenty-eight* letters of the alphabet, the most frequently met with in the speech is certainly the vowel *a*: it appears in an average of 20 per cent. If we add to this that the proportion of the letter *e*, with its various shades, comes to 12 per cent., and of *o* to 8 per cent., the remaining vowels making together about 10 per cent., it will undoubtedly appear that the consonants take but one-half of the room in the speech, and that the language must sound soft and harmonious. This opinion will be strengthened by the consideration that there is no harsh guttural in Gwamba, the letters *k*, *g*, and *h* having not a hard pronunciation.

*Euphony* is indeed a very important element in the formation and derivation of Gwamba words. The same remark is of course applicable to the other Bantu idioms; but they do not follow the same phonetic principles. On the contrary, each particular language has special phonetic principles, which are its private property, and which can well serve as a distinguishing characteristic. This fact is so important that Bleek ought to have had a chapter on euphony in Part I. of his book, where he treats the subject of *Phonology*. Certainly it is very strange that Bleek, in his *Comparative Grammar* of Bantu Languages, did not write a word on euphonic principles and rules. Was it, perhaps, because he could not ascertain surely enough what these principles were in each language, on account of the scantiness of his sources of information? True

it is, at any rate, that one must be thoroughly well acquainted with a language to understand perfectly the principle of its euphony; and it has such a great importance that the grammarian must always be on the watch not to miss it. However, there can be no difficulty in finding examples where the application of euphonic rule is to be detected. Thus, it is the case with foreign words, when they are introduced into a language: two sister-tongues will not always give the same form to the same word, and generally Gwamba does not alter a foreign word as much as Suto does.

But let us take a few examples to show the way those idioms adapt to themselves a European word. The word 'book' has passed into several of the South African languages. Both Gwamba and Suto have retained the English sound, and have only added a termination, made of a vowel; but Gwamba has chosen the vowel *u* to make it harmonize with the first syllable, whilst Suto chose *a* in order to lighten the word, for in Suto the vowel *u* would in that word have too much weight. We have therefore *buku* in Gwamba, and *buka* in Suto.

Again, the Dutch word for *to work* is *werk*, from which Ma-Gwamba have made *berenga* and Ba-Suto *bereka*. This is in accordance with a remark made by Bleek, that in Gwamba (Tekeza) and in Xosa the tendency to nasalization is stronger than in Chuana. However, we cannot make of it a permanent rule, for even that nasalization of words is oftentimes affected by euphony; and after a careful examination one might possibly be led to say that the Chuana system of nasalization is the contrary of the Gwamba system. If we take, for instance, the English word 'paper,' we find that Ma-Gwamba have made of it *papelo*, without any nasal sound, whilst Ba-Suto have made it *pampiri*, and thus introduced a nasal consonant into it.

Still there are many foreign words which have taken the same shape in both languages, an example of which is found in the word *veke*, which in Gwamba and Suto means 'a week.'

Mr. Maples will have to prove the accuracy of his statement,

when he said in his "Notes on Ma-Kua," "The English *o* (as in 'go') is unknown in Ma-Kua and in South African languages generally, the *o* of the vocabularies usually standing for the English *oa* in such a word as 'soar,' or the *a* in 'water,' 'call,' etc." I beg leave to say that the sound of *o* as in 'go' is not unknown, but it is less common than the other shades of *o*. We find it in the Gwamba word *lo*, which is of frequent usage, in the word *ngopfo*, etc. It also occurs in the Suto word *bobe* 'evil,' *lona* 'you,' etc.

Many ways of combining consonants are to be found in Gwamba. But we must notice two remarkable peculiarities which occur in the union of certain consonants with certain vowels, or rather double-vowels. Let us take first the case of *m*, as illustrated by the first class prefix of nouns. This prefix is *mo*, and if it is applied to a radical which begins with the vowel *a*, it should seemingly give *mo-a* . . . , etc. But the "génie de la langue" does not allow of such a form, on account of euphony; and consequently the vowel *o* changes into the semivowel *w*, and the initial consonant *m* becomes a guttural *n*, which Lepsius represents by *ñ*, and which also belongs to English, as in the word 'singing.'

Therefore instead of *mo-a* the Gwamba says *ñwa*; for instance, 'a child' is in Gwamba *ñwana*, which stands for *mo-ana*.

But it is not only with the prefix *mo*, neither only with the vowel *a*, that this rule finds an application. The meeting of the vowel *e* will produce the same effect, of which an example can be taken from the locative case of certain nouns.

The locative is formed by adding *n* or *en* at the end of the noun; the word *mathamo* might in the locative have become *mathamo-en*, instead of which it becomes *mathañwen*. In the same manner the locative of *nsimo* will be *nsiñwen*, and so on with all substantives which terminate in *mo*.

The second consonant to be mentioned is *b*, which has an analogous peculiarity. This letter cannot in Gwamba precede two vowels of which the first had the sound of *o* or of *u*; it cannot precede sounds represented by the joined vowels *oa*,

*ua, oe, ue*, etc. We can take an illustration of this from a class of nouns whose prefix is *bo* or *bu*. Thus the Gwamba word for a 'boat' comes from the radical *at* and takes the prefix *bo*; consequently it might have had the form of *bo-at-o*. But the 'génie de la langue' and its euphonic principle cannot accept such a sound as *bo-a*; and will not even allow the vowel *o* to be replaced by its corresponding semivowel *w*, as was the case with the prefix *mo*. Here, instead of the *o*, the Gwamba will have the semivowel *y*, and the *b* undergoes no change, so that the *bo-a* becomes *bya*; and the word for a 'boat' will be *byato*. In the same manner, the word for 'beer' is *byalwa* instead of *bu-alwa*.

Again, the same rule applies to the locative case of the nouns which terminate with *bo* or *bu*, whatever may be their respective prefixes. Thus the word *hubo* will not make its locative in *hubwen*, but in *hubyen*. *Nkhubu* will give *nkhubyen*; *mekhubu*, *mekhubyen*, and so on.

#### IV. MORPHOLOGY.

Before giving here the table of the Gwamba classes of prefixes, it will be necessary to speak briefly of a word or letter whose character Dr. Bleek could not define. Quoting from his *Comparative Grammar*, we read in the paragraph 471 about "Tekeza" the following: "An initial vowel (frequently *a*), which is evidently unconnected with the prefix, occasionally precedes the noun in these vocabularies. The nature of this vowel is not clear. When an *a*, it may be merely the genitive particle."

We gather from this: 1. That Bleek has noticed that in Gwamba a vowel may precede the noun; 2. That this vowel may be either *a* or another vowel; 3. That this initial vowel is but occasional; 4. That it is unconnected with the prefix.

I am glad to be able to confirm Bleek's observations on this point, and I think I can explain the nature of this vowel.

As to the last sentence of the quotation, Dr. Bleek's vocabularies are not at present at my disposal, so that I cannot point out the words in which the said initial vowel may be merely "the genitive particle." But it is no matter of importance.

Now to the four observations which Bleek made upon the initial vowel, we must add a few more, which will lead us to understand its *nature*.

1. This vowel always precedes a word beginning with a consonant.

2. It may precede, not only nouns, though this case is the most frequent, but also other words, as, for instance, the preposition *ka*, the adverb *hāsi*, etc.

3. When a noun depends on a preposition, and a preposition always precedes its regimen, the initial vowel will *not* find room between the preposition and the noun.

4. This last rule is capable of a general extension, for the initial vowel will *not* precede a word which is so closely connected with a preceding word as to make with it a grammatical member of a sentence.

5. The vowel varies according to the phonetic character of the word it precedes:

6. It is usually found to precede the most important member of a sentence, or any important member, especially so when this member opens the sentence.

From these various observations it will appear that this initial vowel is an *epenthetic letter*, to the occurrence of which a double cause must be ascribed, namely: *euphony* and *emphasis*. Wherefore it has a double function: 1. When Ma-Gwamba pronounce a word of importance in their speech, they like to open the mouth with a vowel, especially after a pause; and they want this vowel the most when the first syllable of the word bears the accent. Euphony is then the ruling principle in such a case. 2. If in his speech a Mo-Gwamba wants to emphatically mark a noun or another word, he will as a manner of announcement put this initial vowel before it; but he must use the initial vowel which euphony would require. This second function is not

therefore opposite to the first; but very often they are united.

It strikes me that this Gwamba vowel is perhaps identical with the vowel which often precedes nouns in Xosa and Zulu, and which has also attracted the attention of Dr. Bleek. But I dare not insist upon comparing them, because Dr. Bleek assigns quite another rôle to the Kafir initial vowel. In paragraphs 461 and sequent he calls it "article" and he says (464): "Although it is clear that the initial vowel was originally a pronoun (derived from, and at first identical with, the derivative prefix which it precedes), and used with the force of an article, it can hardly be said now to have this power. Its employment appears mainly to depend upon usage, and scarcely upon any intention of thereby defining the noun. The position of this ancient article at the beginning of the noun accords with the general position of the demonstrative pronouns in Kafir, which in this language, as well as in Isubu, precede the noun, instead of being placed after it, as in Setshuâna and most of the Bântu languages. Vestiges of this old article are also found in some other Bântu languages (as in Mpongwe)."

After this quotation I feel justified in considering this initial vowel in Xosa as similar and parallel to the Gwamba one. But I regret to say I cannot endorse Dr. Bleek's opinions upon it. First, it was in vain that I sought in his *Comparative Grammar* for the ground upon which he states "that it is clear the initial vowel was originally a pronoun, and used with the force of an article." He gives no proof of this, and therefore the words "it is clear" must be taken only as the expression of a subjective opinion. Now, the end of the sentence, and the sentence following it, contain other statements which contradict his opinion; for he says that the initial vowel has *not now* the power of an article, that its employment depends upon *usage*, and that its function is *not to define* the nouns. Here, I quite concur in these three remarks: and I can only wish that linguists may study more closely the question of this initial vowel.

In fact the Bântu languages have no article, and their



peculiar genius admits of none. Often and often have I examined this subject, and I cannot conceive where room could be found to introduce a word which should be called an "article," whether definite or indefinite. Indeed, what is an "article"? In all languages, European or otherwise, which possess articles, we find that these are little words of a special kind which entertain intimate and peculiar relations with substantive nouns. But these relations are very precise and constant, and they may be said to take three forms or to follow three manners: 1. The substantive may be *without* any article, and is then taken in general, with its full extension. 2. The substantive may be preceded by the *indefinite* article, which then particularizes the notion of the noun; but it does not precise it. 3. The substantive may be preceded by the *definite* article, which particularizes and also precises the notion expressed, and draws the attention upon a definite individual or object.

There are thus three notions which, by means of the articles, we can apply to the substantive. But these functions of the articles are only *formal*, and they do not affect in any way the essential idea of the noun.

Now, the Bantu languages possess no special word to exercise this power; and if they want to precise and to define a notion, in order to refer to a single individual and to distinguish it from similar ones, those languages must have recourse to demonstratives, to adjectives, or to some other way of qualifying the noun.

But certainly this is not done by using the initial vowel which we speak of. The initial vowel is used for euphony and for emphasis, be they either joined together or separate. Had Dr. Bleek written a chapter on the phonetic euphony of the Bantu languages, he would probably have detected the nature of this vowel in "Gwamba" (Tekeza).

It will now be necessary to complete Bleek's table of the Gwamba *prefixes*, which are given on page 62.

## PERSONAL PRONOUNS.

SINGULAR.	PLURAL.
1. <i>mo-, mu- n- (mo-l-) mw- (mo-a-)</i>	2. <i>ba-</i>
3. <i>mo-, mu- n- (mo-l-) n- m-</i>	4. <i>me- me-l- me-</i>
5. <i>ri-, re- (—)</i>	6. <i>ma-</i>
7. <i>tši-, ši- tše-, še-</i>	8. <i>tši-, ši- tše-, še-</i>
9. <i>in-, en- im-, em (—)</i>	10. <i>tin- tim- ti-</i>
5 (11). <i>ri-, re- rim- ren-</i>	10. <i>ti- tim- tin-</i>
14 (Abstract). <i>bo-, bu- by-a- (bo-a-)</i>	6. <i>ma-</i>
15. (Infinitive). <i>ko- ku-</i>	

About these prefixes, Dr. Bleek says (§ 471): "The contraction of the form *mu-l-* to *n-* in the 1st and 3rd classes is the chief characteristic of the Tekeza species." This remark is true enough, but Dr. Bleek only possessed a very incomplete table of the Gwamba prefixes, as he himself tells us in the same paragraph. If he had seen a true list of them as they stand in our present table, surely he would have found in it a rich ground for investigation. He would, for instance, have considered as very peculiar and interesting the form of the 8th class, where a newly-discovered consonant forms a prominent feature. Again, his attention would have rested on the 3rd class, where the prefix *n-* is not only a contraction of *mu-l-*, but also a contraction of *mo* before the consonants *t*, *k*, etc., when the accent does not fall upon the prefix; and also on the 1st class, where *mo-a* contracts into *nw-a*; again, on the 14th class, where *bo-a* contracts into *by-a*, etc.

It is greatly to be regretted that Dr. Bleek was not able to complete his work and to write on the Bantu *system of verbs*. I have not yet seen this system fully explained in any book, in any grammar. True it is that it is so peculiar, so very different from what we are accustomed to find in European languages, that I am afraid it will be necessary to overthrow half of our traditional notions on grammatical exposition if we are determined to do justice to the conjugation of Bantu verbs. And first of all, a *conjugation*, what is it? What does that name mean? In a general sense, it means a complete and systematic collection of the forms a verb is capable of taking. Then in Gwamba there is but one such collection, because all the verbs follow the same kind of development. Therefore, in opposition to what we find in Greek, Latin, etc., we can say that in Gwamba, and generally in the Bantu languages, there is only *one* conjugation.

But this name of "conjugation" is often used in a more restricted sense by grammarians, so that in many grammars we are taught that the same verb is capable of following several conjugations, be they affirmative, negative, or otherwise.

Some authors even call by that name every set of moods and tenses which a verb may go through. But, if we were to do the same in Gwamba, it would be an easy matter to show that this language possesses some eighty or hundred conjugations. To take such a course would be somewhat improper, and it will be better to seek for more proper appellations.

We are accustomed to divide a conjugation in several "voices." But here again it is noticeable that grammarians do not agree on the meaning of this word, and that they follow no logical rule in applying it. Their disaccord leads to confusion, and comes from the fact that they have not properly stated what must be meant by a "voice." If we want to avoid that confusion, and to get a clear idea of the Gwamba, and indeed of the Bántu, system of verbs, we must give a precise definition of the word.

As a rule, two or three sets of moods and tenses are ranged under that heading of "voices"; they are the *active*, *passive* and *reflective*. This classification may be good for Indo-European languages; but authors have introduced it into the grammar of other families of idioms, without first examining whether it was really applicable. Were they justified in doing so? Have they not too easily yielded to habit and prejudice?

If the characteristic of a "voice" is only to mark the distinction of the *meaning* of the active and of the passive, then they are right; and consequently we should acknowledge that there are in Gwamba some twenty or thirty 'voices,' namely, the active, passive, reflective, causative, relative, reciprocal, frequentative, qualificative, etc. All of them are grammatically of the same formation; all of them are parallel modifications of the active primitive. To take an example, the word *Ko laba* means 'to seek': the passive is obtained by adding to the radical a syllable (suffix) composed of *i* and *w*, which gives *labiwa* 'be sought.' Similarly, the causative is obtained by adding *i* and *s* to the radical, which gives *labisa* 'cause to seek.' Again, the reciprocal is formed by adding *a n* to the radical, which gives *labana* 'seek each

other.' And so on, all the senses which differ from the primitive active are obtained in a similar way, and the new radicals formed in this manner follow exactly the same conjugation, or conjugations, as the active simple does. The formative process is the same either for the passive, the causative, or any other; and therefore they must be classed under the same heading. If then the passive is to be called a "voice," the causative must be also, as well as the reciprocal, the reflective, and also the combinations of them, for these forms often combine. But to have twenty, or more, voices, either simple or combined, would be rather puzzling.

Some authors have used another name and have called *derivative verbs* the causative, reciprocal, and a few more; but they retained the name of "voices" to apply it to the passive and active only. But in so doing they have created an arbitrary division between the latter class and the former, a division which does not exist in the Bantu grammar, and which has no ground to stand upon. In Latin and Greek the passive does not conjugate the same way as the active, so that there is an active and a passive manner of conjugation. Not so, however, in Gwamba, where active and passive conjugate exactly the same way, as well as the reciprocal, causative, etc. All these forms of the verb only differ by a small alteration of the radical; this alteration is different in each case, but its power and its value are always equivalent, consisting in the addition of a syllable of two letters only.

But then what shall we do? How shall we class those various forms of the Gwamba verb? If we are determined to acknowledge the grammar as it is, and not to mutilate it, it seems we must say that in Gwamba *any passive is but a derivative verb*, and that, beside it, there are several kinds of derivative verbs, such as the reflective, the causative, etc., which are formed by adding affixes to the radical. These affixes are ten in number. As they may be used either singly or in combination, some of the derivative verbs must be called *simple*, because they are formed by the addition of only one

affix; and some must be called *combined*, because they combine in them two or more formative affixes. If, for instance, we take the examples quoted above, we shall note that from the primitive *laba* 'seek,' the simple derivative *labiwa* 'be sought,' is obtained, as also *labisa* 'cause to seek,' and *labana* 'seek each other.' If then we combine them by two, we get *labisiwa*, of which it will be hard to give a right English translation, the meaning coming to this, 'they cause me to be sought'; and another combined derivative will be *labisana*, which means 'they cause each other to be sought.' An example of the combination of three suffixes in one derivative is found in the word *lahlekeriwa*, which means that the subject has 'lost some thing per accident.' This verb is a passive; but the formative suffix of the passive has been applied the last, that is, after the two other, because the sense to be obtained wanted it so.

Many other combinations may take place, and according to the sense of the root give new derivative verbs, in which the respective position of each affix may vary greatly; for it would be erroneous to think that the formative suffix of the passive is always found to occupy the same place. There is but one affix, which, when used, always occupies the same position, it is the formative *prefix* of the reflective; and this is due to the fact that it is the only "prefix" among all those formative affixes.

In opposition to all the derivatives, the verb, when taken as it appears in its simplest form, should be called the *primitive*. Still, one must bear in mind that both primitive and derivative conjugate exactly the same way.

Their conjugation consists of four different and full sets of moods and tenses. These four sets might be called either "voices" or "conjugations," the latter word being of course taken in a restricted sense. As our European languages possess no other expressions, we must choose between those two.

It seems desirable *a priori* to apply the more special term to the simpler division, and to reserve the more general name for the whole. Therefore we shall call "voices" the said

four sets of moods and tenses. We can do it the more rightly, since it has been shown that the passive is a *derivative* and not a voice, so that no confusion will ensue. Accordingly we can say that the Gwamba conjugation divides into *four voices*, as follows:

1. The first one expresses a simple affirmation of the action, and consequently it may be called the *simple affirmative voice*.

2. The second is used to express the action, but only in the relative sentences, and never in the principal proposition; wherefore it must be named the *affirmative relative voice*.

3. The third is always constructed with a negative adverb, and gives a simple negative statement of a fact, so that it may be called the *simple negative voice*.

4. The fourth one has also a negative construction and a negative sense; but its form can only be used in subordinate propositions which begin with a relative pronoun. We therefore shall call it the *negative relative voice*.

Those four voices are not equally rich in forms, because their respective nature cannot allow them always to follow the same development. Thus, the first and third have all the moods and tenses; whilst the second and fourth can evidently have no imperative mood, for an order cannot be given in a subordinate sentence. But apart from such natural deficiencies, all four voices are well provided with the necessary forms; not only that, but very often they have two, even three forms, where European languages have but one, and where indeed one would suffice. A speaker, when choosing among those various forms, will often be guided by mere euphony.

It happens, however, that the fourth voice, the *negative relative*, offers more complicated forms than the three others; and, as the genius of the Bantu languages is prone to simplify the speech as much as possible, the result is that this fourth voice is often avoided, and that the sentence takes another turn.

Many authors have written on the grammar of Bantu

languages ; but, till now, we have not been able to find in their books even the mention of these four voices of the Bantu verb. Shall we conclude from this that Gwamba is among all the Bantu idioms the only one to possess them ? Such a conclusion would not only be very hasty, but also quite wrong ; for, indeed, the four voices are actually existing in the other Bantu idioms, as a closer study of them will surely show. It seems as if the authors, when wishing to unveil to European scholars the structure of those peculiar idioms, had thought it necessary to cast the Bantu grammar in the mould of European languages, but that, in forcing it in, they nipped off those strange features which European languages had nothing to correspond to. It appears to me that the position of the Bantu languages is still far from being fully understood, and that several of their most interesting and most important features have been overlooked and missed. Let scholars make a thorough investigation of the whole matter, with an unprejudiced spirit, and they can be certain they will be richly repaid for their labour.

But to come back to our four voices. I can certify that Suto, which I have been using for the last ten years, has them also ; and it would be easy to lay down their conjugations. Moreover, when perusing the books relating to other Bantu languages, I easily detected in them the forms of the four voices, as they stand respectively in every language described by the authors.

Thus, in his *Kafir Grammar*, Davis gives a complete paradigm of the verb ; he gives the affirmative and negative forms of the tenses. But he never speaks of the relative forms, though they accidentally appear, or a few of them at least, here and there, in the sentences he quotes as examples for special rules.

Grout, in his *Zulu Grammar*, also gives the affirmative and negative verbs, but no relative voices. However, he could not help noticing the most evident forms of the latter, as they repeatedly appear in the paragraphs where he speaks of the "relative pronouns." Let us especially mention



§ 163, *e*, and § 173, 1 and 2. In the examples given there, it will be seen that the verbs at the relative affirmative voice terminate in *yo* and *ko* (according to tenses). But the author tries an explanation of this termination, and says it is "a pronominal euphonic suffix." This explanation is, however, insufficient.

If now, leaving the south, we want an example of how the matter stands in the most northern idiom, we can take Steere's *Handbook of Swahili*, and his *Swahili Exercises*. The author gives much explanation upon the conjugation, but he does not speak of the relative voices. We, however, find some bits of them scattered here and there, for instance, pages 127 and 135 of the *Handbook*, and pages 35 to 37 of the *Exercises*. The author did not miss the change which the verb underwent; but instead of searching the whole conjugation, he only gave the name of "relative sign" to the new syllable introduced.

This discussion would take us too far, if we were to go into more details, and therefore we must leave it now. However, it will be proper, I dare say, to give a sort of justification of our opinion, and to prove that it is rightly grounded. The best way to do that is to take an example of the simple affirmative and affirmative relative voices, and also of the corresponding English conjugation, and then institute a comparison, which, if laid out in a table, will at a glance tell the value of the relative forms of the Gwamba verbs.

Let us take the verb *ndi laba* 'I want,' and write the first person of every tense in the *affirmative simple* and in the *affirmative relative* voices, with the English meaning. In the table we shall suppose that the full sentences are 'I want the knife' *ndi laba mokwana*, and 'the knife which I want' *mokwana lowo ndi labaka*; but for the sake of clearness we will only write the subject and the verb.

This table shows that, in spite of the deficiencies inherent to a conjugation, which can only be used in relative sentences, still this *affirmative relative voice* owns a sufficient set of moods and tenses to allow of our calling it a "voice"; or if the term "voice" is thought objectionable, then there

remains only the other one, that of "conjugation," the use of which is in no way more exempt from inconveniences.

SIMPLE AFFIRMATIVE VOICE.	ENGLISH.	AFFIRMATIVE RELATIVE VOICE.
<i>nda laba</i> . . . . .	I am wanting . . }	<i>ndi labaka</i>
<i>ndi laba</i> . . . . .	I want . . . . . }	
<i>a ndi laba</i> . . . . .	I was wanting . . }	<i>ngi ndi laba</i>
<i>ndi labe</i> . . . . .	} I wanted . . . }	<i>ndi labeke</i>
. . . . .		<i>ndi nga laba</i>
<i>ndi labile</i> . . . . .	} I have wanted }	<i>ndi labileko</i>
<i>a ndi labe</i> . . . . .		<i>ngi ndi labeke</i>
. . . . .	} I had wanted . }	<i>ngi ndi nga laba</i>
<i>a ndi labile</i> . . . . .		<i>ngi ndi labileko</i>
<i>ndi ta laba</i> . . . . .	I shall want . . . .	<i>ndi nga ta laba</i>
<i>a ndi ta laba</i> . . . .	I shall have wanted	<i>ndi nga ba ndi laba</i>
<i>ndi nga ba ndi laba</i>	I should want . . .	<i>ndi ngata bandi laba</i>
<i>ndi nga laba</i> . . . .	I can (or may) want	<i>ndi nga labaka</i>

In the above table we have given only the first person of the singular of each tense; and it is sufficient, for a similar occurrence is observable in the Bantu conjugation as in the English one, namely, that in any tense the form of the verb remains unchanged for all the persons. Thus the English says:

<i>I had wanted</i>	<i>we had wanted</i>
<i>he had wanted</i>	<i>you had wanted</i>
<i>she had wanted</i>	<i>they had wanted</i>
<i>it had wanted</i>	

The pronouns make all the difference. Exactly the same thing happens in Gwamba and all Bantu languages.

Another similarity between English and Gwamba is noticeable in the examples given above. The sentences 'I want the knife,' and 'the knife which I want,' have indeed an identical construction in both languages. But the English has an article, whilst Gwamba has none, as formerly explained.

We find that in Gwamba there is but one conjugation, which every verb must follow. But that conjugation,

tion exhibits two sorts of development : 1. The primitive verb gives rise, by means of radical affixes, to a vast series of derivatives, among which the passive must be classed. 2. Both primitive and derivative conjugate in four voices, of which European languages have no example.

It may be the right place here to make a summary remark upon the now generally adopted way of writing Bantu verbs and sentences. Most English authors incorporate in *one* word the verb, its auxiliary, its pronoun subject, and, if there is one, its objective pronoun. Grout, however, did not do so ; and, as a rule, French and German authors do not do it either. We think the latter are right, and we could prove it ; but a discussion on the matter would be here out of place. We can only say that if this system of orthography were adopted in English, we would, instead of a sentence like 'he had not told it you,' have the big word *hehadnottoldityou*. There is no more reason to apply it to Bantu than to European languages.

A remarkable feature of the Gwamba verb is that the active is often used instead of the passive, if there is no possibility of amphibology.

## V. SEMATOLOGY.

All the Bantu people have been led by nature to use the decimal system in arithmetic, for when they are counting, they always reckon the numbers with their fingers. But, whilst some tribes have special nouns for the first ten numbers, in others the numerals only reach as far as five, and then there is a distinct word for ten. The latter is the case with Gwamba. After five they count 'five and one,' 'five and two,' etc. ; and, again, after ten, they begin with 'ten and one.' For sixteen they accordingly say 'ten and five and one.' However, there is in Gwamba also a distinct word for 'hundred,' so that, in all, the nouns for numerals are seven in number, whilst in English we find about thirty of them.

The ordinal numbers are nearly the same as the common

ones, but *the first* is quite different. In order to say 'the first,' a verb is employed which means 'to be in front of,' and it is used as a substantive ruled by the genitive preposition 'of.' The same thing occurs probably in all the Bantu languages.

Three different words are used for the verb 'to be,' namely, *ba*, *re* (or *le*), and *nga* (or *nge*, *ngi*). None of them has a complete conjugation; but they supply the deficiencies of each other. However, in simple sentences, when 'to be' is only the copula, it is allowed to drop, as in Latin.

The verb 'to have' is expressed by the copula followed by the preposition *na* 'with.' But as we have just said that the copula is commonly suppressed, there remains only the preposition *na*.

The negative adverbs are three in number. One is used absolutely to say 'no,' and the other two always accompany the verb. None of them can be joined with a substantive, and in order to say, for instance, 'no horse,' 'not a penny,' a short and impersonal phrase is generally used. This phrase means 'there is no . . .' or 'there was no . . .,' and on account of its frequent occurrence, it is sometimes taken with the power of an adjective.

It is scarcely possible to obtain from Gwamba people the names of the months, for they do not mind them. When any date is to be determined, they take their various agricultural labours as time marks, and they reckon the beginning of the year to be marked by the first gardening work of the season, which usually takes place in August or September.

Curiously enough, they are somewhat more particular about the division of the day. They have distinct words or phrases to express 'daybreak,' 'sunrise,' 'morning,' 'middle morning,' 'midday,' etc., to 'night' and 'midnight.'

Gwamba possesses a good number of abstract nouns, and when such a noun is wanting, it can be supplied by means of a verb, the infinitive of which is then used as a substantive. But, as might be expected, the actual abstract words express more often sentiments, passions, and moral dispositions, than intellectual abstractions.

Mimical gesture and intonation often accompany the speech. Thus, when an object is pointed to at some distance, the pitch of the voice is raised in proportion with the distance, and if the objects stand very far, the voice will attain the highest pitch. But, it must be borne in mind, that this is not characteristic of South African languages, for the same thing is done in Europe, either in a familiar and playful way, or by uneducated persons.

The Hottentot clicks which have crept into Suto, Xosa, and Zulu, are not known to the Gwamba language. However, the young men who learn Zulu affect sometimes to use clicks, by mere pride, to show that they know some words of foreign origin.

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